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ABSTRACT

The National Commission on Performance-Based Education was formed to coordinate and integrate nationally plans of performance-based teacher education. The goals of the commission are defining competence, evaluating it, training for it, and managing programs of performance-based education and certification. The initial programs of the commission include the creation of two task forces: one to begin the development of a taxonomy of teaching behavior, the other to develop training programs for managers of performance-based systems. The commission also hopes to conduct a survey of current activity in the field and to create a center for the dissemination of this information. (JA)

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THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON PERFORMANCE-BASED EDUCATION

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THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON PERFORMANCE-BASED EDUCATION

It is difficult to date when the interest in performance-based teacher education and certification became a national movement; but that it is a national movement now is indisputable. Over half the states have taken some kind of action ranging from the development of master plans for the development and implementation of performance-based programs, as in New York, to continuing its study and doing some preliminary exploration, as in Wyoming. A number of colleges and universities have implemented programs, though their numbers are comparatively small. The American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education whose Committee on Competency Based Education has disseminated information about performance-based education and certification, has been especially active. There is, in fact, considerable related activity throughout the country; much of this activity is either explorations of the meaning of performance-based education or the implementation of performance-based education or formulation of alternatives to performance-based education.

Two characteristics may be observed in all the recent flurry. Although there is considerable interest in performance-based certification, with pilot work underway, very few students are actually enrolled in performance-based programs. Further, there is much real opposition to the concept of performance-based education.

Lately, a third characteristic of the movement is beginning to appear. It is becoming an issue that is deeply implicated in the politics of teacher unions and associations. The reason for the organized teachers' making an issue of the movement is that some plans for

certification on a performance-base also project a system of recertification, for experienced teachers, at periodic intervals.

These three characteristics of the national movement for performance-based education and certification are testimony to its greatest weakness. There is no center of development or advocacy for the diverse groups who are now interested in performance-based education. The work of the AACTE cannot be described, nor does that organization wish to have it so described, as advocacy. The developmental work conducted in a number of institutions is not being carried out in a cooperative way, aimed at achieving common goals. And although state education department personnel who have developed certification plans do have an organization, the Multi-state Consortium, which provides them with an opportunity to attack problems at the state level, their work is not coordinated with pertinent research and development activities going on in colleges and universities.

This lack of coordination and integration is neither planned nor maliciously motivated. It simply points up that what we lack is any organization to bring the entire national movement into focus, provide its leadership, stimulate its growth and development, generate funds for it, advocate its development, and protect it from its enemies.

About a year ago the Rockefeller Brothers Fund gave ETS a small grant to study the feasibility of developing a consortium-like arrangement which would coordinate plans across the states. We selected a Coordinating Committee to act as the study group for this project. The members of that Coordinating Committee are on this panel.

We spent nine months studying the state of the performance-based education movement and considering such factors as what its goals ought to be, what programs it would need, what kinds of organizational structure would facilitate the achievement of its goals, and how an organizational structure could best be created to provide genuine and acceptable leadership to the many people involved in the movement.

We eventually arrived at the notion of creating a Commission. How we arrived at this concept, the alternatives we considered, the people we consulted, and similar details, are documented in the report we recently submitted to the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. We chose to create a National Commission which would be a non-profit, independent organization, designed to stimulate and coordinate the performance-based education movement.

The Concept of a Commission

We chose the Commission structure for two reasons. First, we needed to create an organization that would be independent of any already constituted political or educational institutions or organizations. It was apparent to us that they represented so many diverse interests that an organization directed by any one of them would surely create distrust among the others. The second reason for our decision was that the Commission structure would provide great flexibility because it could develop its own programs and select individuals or groups or institutions to work on those programs without being beholden to any outside group and without having to mediate many political considerations.

The formal organization of the Commission will consist of a Board of Trustees, which serves the function of any Board of Trustees; a Coordinating Committee, which is esentially the executive committee of the Commission; and a very small administrative staff. The programs of the Commission will be planned by the Coordinating Committee, using the advice of a wide variety of individuals and groups. The Commission's work will be carried out by task forces, which will usually be chaired or cochaired by a member of the Coordinating Committee, but will be composed of individuals, outside the Coordinating Committee, whose interests and abilities are most relevant to the work of a particular task force.

What we have proposed is a relatively simple structure which can capitalize on the advice and work of other individuals and other groups. The Commission is committed not to engage in activities that are now being carried out by other individuals unless they can be coordinated into a larger plan to the mutual benefit of all those who would be cooperating on that plan. Some aspects of what is needed to make a national movement are now being carried out by other groups; there is no necessity for the Commission to duplicate these efforts.

Goals of the Commission

As we surveyed the kinds of activities that were being conducted throughout the country, it was apparent that the National Commission and the movement to performance-based teacher education and certification faced three basic problems: (1) The movement badly needed a concept of relevant teaching competencies developed to the point where it could be

used as the basis for training and for evaluation of competence. (2) The changeover to performance-based programs requires an enormous amount of developmental work, which it was obvious was not progressing very rapidly; this led us to conclude that the development of instructional systems was a priority task. (3) It was also obvious that practical difficulties were being experienced in the changeover to performance-based programs and certification systems; thus it was clear that priority had to be given to developing managers of training programs and managers of certification systems.

We also recognized the need for developing an information base for performance-based systems and for creating a center for the dissemination of information about the performance-based movement. But we gave these two activities somewhat lower priority than resolving the three problems described previously. As a matter of practical fact, we intend to undertake as much as we can and will be limited only by the funds we can generate for a particular activity. Practical experience shows that some funding agencies may be interested in one program more than another; if they are willing to support a program, even though we have given it low priority, we shall obviously gladly accept their generous offer to help.

The importance of establishing the priorities is that they will create a sense of direction and movement related to the basic problems of performance-based education. There is very little question in anybody's mind that until we have defined what we mean by teaching competency, have developed effective systems for training for it, have

developed systems for evaluating it, and have learned how to manage programs at the institutional and state level, the performance-based movement has very little chance of ultimately succeeding. Further, as we have repeatedly said, even though there are individuals working on these problems, the work is largely uncoordinated and some of it lacks the substantial support it ought to have. By indicating what our major goals and priorities are, we create a distinctive character to the Commission and suggest what kinds of problems must be solved if the movement is to have viability.

Goals of the Commission

Solving the problems discussed above is the ultimate goal of the Commission. That is, the Commission is committed to facilitating the solution of the problems of defining competence, evaluating it, training for it, and managing programs of performance-based education and certification. We hope within five years to have created five models of institutions -- institutions where the entire teacher-education program is committed to a performance-based structure and represents a distinctive concept of how such a program ought to be organized and what its components ought to be.

To reach such a goal we need to stimulate development of a taxonomy of teaching behavior, and the development of instructional systems, evaluation systems, and management systems. We have chosen to begin by attacking the most urgent of the problems.

Initial Programs of the Commission

The Commission's first two task forces will be designed to work on two basic concerns. A task force will be created to begin the development of a taxonomy of teaching behavior with all the precise descriptions of behavior and methods of measuring the behavior implied in the concept of a taxonomy. A second task force will be set up to develop training programs for managers of performance-based systems. We hope to secure funding for these two programs and to begin work on them in the immediate future.

We also hope to conduct a survey of what is currently going on in the field so that more precise information than is now available can be offered to persons interested in performance-based education. We also hope to create a Center for the dissemination of the information as soon as we can secure funding for it.

The Commission, during its first year, will also be entertaining ideas of other kinds of programs to generate. Our pragmatic goal is to produce useable products every year. We will generate manuals of taxonomies and descriptions of behavior, training manuals, and any other type of product that can be used by people interested in developing performance-based programs. We will also attempt to arrive at a clearer idea of other kinds of problems, so that we can begin to formulate programs to resolve them.

As I indicated above, the way in which the Commission will work will be to involve relevant individuals in its deliberations and particularly in the work of the task forces. We also hope to give the Commission as

much visibility as is possible so that the image is created in the minds of educators and the public of an education profession seriously engaged in creating new teacher-training programs and certification systems.

Conclusion

As we talked to many individuals in the past year it was clear that some focus was necessary of the kind we think we have now created. We are optimistic that in building the Commission we have responded to the concerns of many persons who provided us with many ideas about what a center of national leadership ought to be like. We have involved and will continue to involve as many individuals as we possibly can and intend to keep all concerned and interested individuals informed on the work of the Commission.

It strikes me that the Commission is even more important in these days than it appeared to be a year ago. We are facing a period of indeterminate length during which there will be a retrenchment in funding available to education from the federal government. The Commission can serve as one spokesman to advocate the work of reform in teacher education and highlight one of this century's most significant movements in education.

As we are about to begin the work of the Commission, we are optimistic that we can achieve its goals. From all of you we ask your interest, your concern, your cooperation, your criticisms, and above all your support because the Commission is not the concern of only a few professionals. It is intended to be representative of many.